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UNITED STATES COUNTERINSURGENCY THEORY

by

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Abstract

The United States has engaged in counterinsurgency conflicts throughout its history but has never fully developed the strategic political and military doctrine necessary to succeed. The goal of an insurgency is to overthrow the seated government of a nation and each insurgency requires the passive and active participation of segments of the population to obtain the necessary power. The population of a nation thus becomes the critical battleground as the insurgency and the government battle for control of the "hearts and minds" of the population in a winner take all contest. Winning the "hearts and minds" of the people is more than just being nice, it requires protection and security around the clock to remove the influence of the insurgency. The United States military has historically shown a predilection for high technology warfare with lethality coupled with extreme precision from standoff ranges to replace the need for "boots on the ground." Speed, lethality, and firepower are important factors in warfare but in counterinsurgency patience, persistence, and non-kinetic means are the most important. Synchronizing military action to provide effective security and protection of the population to enable a government's economic, political, and social reform is critical to achieve victory in counterinsurgency.

INTRO

Insurgents have long challenged the rule of governments and leaders that they felt were illegitimate through low intensity, guerrilla warfare in an attempt to gain power via a mix of subversion, propaganda, and military action. Darius the Great, the King of Persia (558-486 BC), his son Xerxes I (519-465 BC), Alexander the Great (356-323 BC), and the Roman Empire (31 BC-476 AD) were faced with insurgencies during their reign of power in Persia.[1] Insurgency is not a revolutionary form of warfare yet the United States largely failed to employ effective counter insurgency (COIN) methods in Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan, favoring conventional warfare techniques which yield little benefit in countering an insurgency.[2] The U.S. failure to focus on a tenet of COIN, the population is the key and therefore has to be protected and secured, is a result of its historical focus on technology and conventional warfare doctrine.[3]

Military forces untrained for counterinsurgency operations can unknowingly support the insurgent cause rather than prevent it through their actions. Units untrained and unaware of proper COIN strategy tend to focus on the conventional tactics with which they are comfortable, often to the detriment of the overall mission.[4] General Stanley McChrystal's Commander's Counterinsurgency Guidance for the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) includes a simple example of a convoy which unnecessarily alienated the Afghan people while supposedly trying to provide security: "An ISAF patrol was travelling through a city at a high rate of speed, driving down the center to force traffic off the road. Several pedestrians and other vehicles were pushed out of the way. A vehicle approached from the side into the traffic circle. The gunner fired a pen flare at it, which entered the vehicle and caught the interior on fire. As the ISAF patrol sped away, Afghans crowded around the car. How many insurgents did the patrol make that day?"[5] All military actions within COIN must attempt to secure the population and

convince the skeptical elements that support of the central government, or occupying power, is in their best interests. Racing through city streets and setting cars on fire does little to positively persuade a population to trust and support the government's effort.

A Newsweek reporter witnessed two separate units conduct a search of a village in Afghanistan through vastly different means. The first, an elite Army Special Forces unit which understood Pashtun customs demonstrated awareness and respect for the elders and the women of the village. This patrol accomplished its mission and quietly left the area without any instigation or provocation of the situation. A short period later a second unit, which was not trained in COIN and did not understand local customs and courtesies, arrived. The troops forced their way into a farmer's house and when he panicked and fled they slammed him to the ground. The unit then searched the women for concealed weapons in a degrading manner inconsistent with Pashtun customs.[6] The farmer felt dishonored and would likely attempt to regain his honor in the future by joining with local insurgent forces to attack the next ISAF unit to visit the area. The lack of knowledge of the fundamental basics of COIN was prevalent in the conventional forces deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan and their subsequent mishandling of the situation.

Following the Vietnam War, U.S. foreign policy appeared to shift to a strategy of low-cost engagements favoring high-tech, rapid, and decisive results and fought with a minimum footprint of ground forces.[7] This strategy would insure minimum casualties and therefore limit the public outcry that would likely accompany mass casualty notifications. Following Operation DESERT STORM the U.S. participated in several small engagements in Somalia, Bosnia, and Serbia in which there was clearly a desire to limit casualties and to the maximum extent possible utilize airpower alone or with a minimum deployment of ground combat forces. The Pentagon

was focusing heavily on improvements in technology, precision, and firepower as a substitute for boots on the ground to achieve military objectives.

The "laws of war" regarding conventional warfare have been carefully studied and written about for generations and hold true regardless of changes in technology, doctrine, and firepower. In a conventional campaign these axioms are critical to keep the enemy off-balance and overmatched but in a COIN campaign, non-kinetic factors such as patience, detection, and surveillance replace the emphasis on firepower, formations, and frequency of engagements.[8] Use of kinetic weapons always introduces the risk of collateral damage and unnecessary casualties to the population which will alienate them from the government and may push them towards the insurgency. "The conflict will be won by persuading the population, not by destroying the enemy."[9] The insurgency's ability to gain and maintain the active or passive support of a portion of the population will determine the long-term effectiveness of the insurgency and is the insurgency's center of gravity.[10] The priority of effort in COIN therefore must be to protect and secure the population and show the illegitimacy of the insurgent cause while highlighting the restraint and legitimate control of the government.

The reluctance of the U.S. government to focus on COIN is not a new phenomenon and was visible during much of the Cold War period. From the beginnings of the Cold War President Dwight Eisenhower focused on a 'New Look' policy which utilized a Massive Retaliation defense strategy based on the primary threat of employing nuclear weapons in any conflict to deter adversaries. By relying on the threat of nuclear war Eisenhower cut the size and role of conventional and unconventional forces to save money for domestic programs.[11]

President Kennedy in 1961, believing the U.S. needed a more realistic force capable of responding to Soviet aggression around the globe desired a more balanced force capable of

missions across the entire spectrum of warfare. The "all or nothing" policy of Massive

Retaliation provided only for all-out nuclear war or no response at all.[12] Instituting a Flexible

Response policy Kennedy directed Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara to place an emphasis

on counterinsurgency and directed the armed forces to prepare COIN capabilities. With a deep

focus on conventional and nuclear warfare, the services were reluctant to change their orientation

and created Special Forces units in an attempt to isolate COIN from the rest of the services.[13]

As the U.S. military increased its involvement in Vietnam it remained equally committed

to the primacy of conventional and nuclear warfare doctrine. Army Chief of Staff General

George Decker attempted to persuade President Kennedy that conventional forces required no

additional training for counter-guerrilla operations and "any good soldier can handle

guerrillas."[14] The United States Air Force, like the other services, sought to distance itself from

COIN and created a relatively small special operations unit. It was not until 1967, a full six

years after the introduction of USAF special operations aircraft in Vietnam, that the first doctrine

regarding the use of airpower in COIN was established.[15]

Trained and equipped to fight a conventional war in Europe against the Soviet Union, the

U.S. military remained extremely reluctant to modify its strategy in Vietnam until it was too

late.[16] The U.S. military based its focus of the war in Vietnam on the destruction of the North

Vietnamese fielded forces and not on COIN. A senior Army general in Saigon quipped, "I'll be

damned if I permit the United States Army, its institutions, its doctrine and its traditions, to be

destroyed just to win this lousy war."[17] Early U.S. military leadership in Vietnam focused

primarily on large conventional operations with success determined by quantitative measures, the

notorious body count. It was not until General Creighton Abrams took over in mid-1968 and

launched a highly effective COIN strategy that the shift from conventional application of forces occurred, but it was far too late in the war to be successful.[18]

Forty years later in Iraq and Afghanistan, this focus on conventional warfare is not only ineffective but also counterproductive to the overall effort.[19] COIN missions often require employment of large numbers of troops in non-military roles due to the absence of enough civilian personnel. Law enforcement, intelligence gathering, reconstruction, instituting economic and social reforms, and information operations are examples of activities forces will be required to perform due to a lack of trained civilians. David Galula, a noted COIN expert stated, "Thus, a mimeograph may turn out to be more useful than a machine gun, a soldier trained as a pediatrician more important than a mortar expert, cement more wanted than barbed wire."[20]

Despite being the most prevalent form of warfare over the past few centuries, COIN has not received the attention and notoriety that conventional warfare has received throughout history. Henri Jomini described his COIN experience with Napoleon's Army in Spain when he stated, "I acknowledge that my prejudices are in favour of the good old times when the French and the English Guards courteously invited each other to fire first – as at Fontenoy – preferring them to the frightful epoch when priests, women and children throughout Spain plotted the murder of isolated soldiers."[21] This sentiment reflects the prevalent doctrine of that era in which leaders sought a decisive battle as the preferred method of achieving an absolute victory. Clausewitz believed an enemy's fielded forces were usually a Center of Gravity (COG) and this focus helped shape American doctrine. Direct and overwhelming violent assault against the enemy has hallmarked the American way of war since World War II; patience is not an American military virtue.[22] As the sole superpower of the world with unrivaled conventional

military power COIN is likely to be the prevalent form of conflict in the future and understanding its intricacies will be critical to the national security of the U.S.

The U.S. engagements in Iraq and Afghanistan did not begin as COIN, but rather these conventional conflicts morphed into COIN as insurgents rose up to fight what they perceived as the illegitimate occupation of their territory and the implementation of a Western puppet government.[23] The delayed recognition by the U.S. leadership of the insurgent campaign and the inappropriate methods implemented to fight the insurgency was due in large part to a lack of understanding of COIN at all levels in the military and the government.[24] Five years after the U.S. became engaged in Afghanistan the Army and Marine Corps jointly published Field Manual (FM) 3-24, *Counterinsurgency,* in a desperate attempt to fill the void regarding contemporary COIN doctrine. Over twenty years had elapsed since the last COIN document was written and much of the corporate knowledge regarding U.S. experience with COIN was gone. The appearance of FM 3-24 has gone a long way to enlightening the military regarding the proper conduct of COIN and is likely the reason for the turnaround in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Given the duration of the current conflicts and the likelihood of additional COIN conflicts emerging in the future, it is important to identify the COG of an insurgency and apply the appropriate resources to counter it. In the vast majority of insurgencies the population is the COG for both the government and for the insurgents as the population provides the power base for both sides. Multiple lines of operation (LOO) must be sequenced together in a COIN conflict to defeat the insurgency and protect the Center of Gravity; however the line of operation regarding security is by far the most critical to achieving success. The integration of socio-economic, political, diplomatic, and military efforts must be focused along the security line of operation to achieve leverage against the principal strategic center of gravity. Without effective

security, the remaining LOO will be ineffective and unproductive, providing the enemy with possible targets of opportunity and squandering monetary investments.[25]

Guerrillas never win wars, but their adversaries often lose them!
--Charles W. Thayer, *1963*

Insurgencies

Joint Publication 1-02, *The Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms,* defines an insurgency as an organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through the use of subversion and armed conflict. Counterinsurgency (COIN) is the comprehensive civilian and military efforts taken to simultaneously defeat and contain insurgency and address its root causes. The primary objective of a COIN campaign must be to build or ensure popular support for the government while marginalizing or eliminating the insurgency through the integration and synchronization of political, security, economic, and informational lines of operation which produce government legitimacy and effectiveness. COIN is primarily an armed political struggle against the insurgency for one overarching objective, control of the environment and the population.[26] Military forces can provide security and enforce obedience but cannot achieve the broad settlement required to defeat an insurgency.[27]

In order for an insurgency to have any chance at becoming established there are general prerequisites that are required to be in place. In *Counterinsurgency Warfare* David Galula identifies four main conditions essential for an insurgency to grow; a cause, a police and administrative weakness in the counterinsurgent camp, a not-too-hostile geographic environment, and outside support in the middle and later stages of an insurgency.[28] The first two

conditions (cause and counterinsurgent weakness) are absolute requirements while outside support is as a force multiplier that is not required at the initiation of the insurgency but might be required in later phases. Without a cause to unite segments of the population there is no insurgency, rather a criminal element operating within society. If the government possesses a strong and effective police force, the insurgency will not have a chance to grow.

For each government that faces an insurgency there is a cause or set of causes that perpetuate an attempt to overthrow the empowered government. Insurgents have capitalized on social, political, economic, racial, artificial, or security related grievances against the government which provides fertile recruiting grounds for an insurgency to ferment. [29] Broad-reaching, enduring, and emotional causes which have great appeal with large segments of the population provide the most lucrative support. The more powerful and attractive the cause is to the population, the more active and passive support will be available to the insurgent. Control of the population thus becomes crucial for "the exercise of political power depends on the tacit or explicit agreement of the population or, at worst, on its own submissiveness."[30]

Mao Tse-tung, considered the father of modern insurgency stated in *On Guerrilla Warfare* in 1937, "The richest source of power to wage war lies in the masses of the people."[31] The support of the general population is crucial to guerrilla warfare operations and every action the insurgent takes must factor in its ability to gain and maintain support. Without the passive or active support of a portion of the population an insurgency would be without concealment, intelligence, and logistics and would face almost certain destruction. A government faced with an insurgency equally requires the support of the population. To the government the population provides legitimacy as well as a source of power to draw from. The battle therefore over the "hearts and minds" of the population is really a battle for control, with both sides of the conflict

utilizing the full balance of their power in the matter. In COIN, the side that learns faster and adapts more rapidly—the better learning organization—usually wins. Counterinsurgencies have been called learning competitions.[32]

The insurgent and counterinsurgent each employs considerable effort to separate the other from the population while attempting to draw support to their own side.[33] With the population at the center of both sides efforts it is critical to focus on ways to gain control of the population. Clausewitz argued that war is an extension of politics and this is particularly true in COIN where winning the allegiance of the population for the government requires tremendous political involvement and potential conciliation or settlement of grievances to remove the insurgent cause. Clausewitz identified the term center of gravity as "the point against which all the energies should be directed."[34] The DoD Dictionary defines a COG as the source of power that provides moral or physical strength, freedom of action, or will to act. Applying the critical factor analysis model created by Dr. Joe Strange provides a view into the critical nodes of an identified COG and helps determine relevant factors to aid commanders in attacking or protecting a COG. This analysis looks at three factors related to a COG, critical capabilities, critical requirements, and critical vulnerabilities (see Figure 1).[35] A thorough analysis of a COG allows leaders and planners to determine the physical or geographic points, key events, functions, and systems that will provide unity of effort and unity of action during a campaign.[36]

Critical capabilities are "a means that is considered a crucial enabler for a center of gravity to function as such and is essential to the accomplishment of the specified or assumed objective."[37] Critical capabilities enable the COG to be the source of power and are what the COG can do that puts fear in the commander within the context of the mission. With the COG in counterinsurgency identified as the population it is imperative to determine what capabilities or

contributions the population has that enables it to be the COG, as this will vary from region to region based on the peculiarities of local culture as well as the unique circumstances of the insurgency. A thorough analysis will uncover many capabilities but a short list might include the ability to provide a safe haven or security to insurgents. As Mao Tse-tung stated the population is the sea in which the insurgent fish swim, as the population hides the insurgents, and they are easily able to blend in. The population also provides a replenishing supply of recruits to fill losses, which keeps the insurgency going.

Critical requirements are "an essential condition, resource, and means for a critical capability to be fully operational."[38] Critical requirements are what allow the critical capability to operate and therefore the COG to function. Critical requirements in COIN might be identified as the basic needs of human survival along with basic elements of freedom or liberty. Specific critical requirements could be sustenance and shelter; security/stability and the rule of law; civil services such as sewer, medical, and education; governance or arbitration; and expression or self-actualization of religion or political expression. The absence of physical violence is important but factors similar Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs are paramount. Basic individual or physiological needs such as food, water, and warmth are required for human survival and societal needs such as love and belongingness are secondary to the individual needs. When faced with survival, individuals will choose the side that is best able to meet their basic needs.[39]

Critical vulnerabilities are "an aspect of a critical requirement which is deficient or vulnerable to direct or indirect attack that will create decisive or significant impacts."[40] Vulnerabilities are aspects of critical requirements which can be exploited or disrupted by an adversary in order to gain leverage upon the COG. In a COIN environment both sides can exploit the basic needs. Examples of critical vulnerabilities might be poor sustenance

distribution infrastructure; poor security, either indifferent or incapable; lack of civil services; poor or partial governance due to divisive factions, corruption, and/or apathy; and repression or dispossession. By identifying the specific vulnerabilities the government can focus its resources on these aspects and use the asymmetric dominance of its power to better meet the needs of the population and defeat the insurgency.

Center of Gravity (COG)	Critical Capability (CC)
-Population	-Safe Haven / Security -Equippage / financing -Recruits / agents / proponents -Logistics network -C2 network -Legitimacy / validation -Comfort / profit
Critical Vulnerability (CV)	**Critical Requirement (CR)**
1. Poor sustenance distribution infrastructure 2. Poor security: (indifference/incapability) 3. Lack of civil services 4. Poor or partial governance (apathy/divisive factions) 5. Repression or dispossession	1. Sustenance & shelter 2. Security / stability (protection / rule of law) 3. Civil Services (sewer / medical / education) 4. Governance / arbitration 5. Expression / self-actualization (religious / political freedom)

Figure 1: Critical Factor Analysis (personal interview with Lt Col Hume)

Critical vulnerabilities lead to decisive points (DPs) which are a geographic place, specific key event, critical factor, or function that, when acted upon, allows commanders to gain a marked advantage over an adversary or contribute materially to achieving success.[41] Decisive points provide a mechanism for "affecting a protected center of gravity."[42] They can be linked together along a line of operation (LOO), related in either time or space, to achieve a desired effect. Logical lines of operation assist commanders with a visual depiction of how the military will interact, assist, and support other nonmilitary elements of power. In a COIN campaign plan a logical LOO of Good Governance might link DPs such as rule of law, establishment of governmental institutions, social services, and elimination of corruption. Lines of operation provide a means to coordinate and synchronize the efforts of all governmental players in COIN to ensure unity of effort.[43]

Every insurgency is complex and contains its own unique peculiarities but a few consistent examples of logical LOOs are governmental institutional-building measures, employment and reconstruction, military and security operations, Information Operations and Psychological Operations, and Diplomatic and Political. Each LOO is critical in the overall fight against an insurgency but without effective military and security operations implemented up front or simultaneous with other efforts the counterinsurgency might be doomed to failure. Without the establishment of security other LOO's will struggle to take hold and be productive, and will drain away vital resources and treasure without the appropriate return on the investment.

David Kilcullen, a noted Australian counterinsurgency expert, identifies in the "Accidental Guerrilla Syndrome" a four-step process by which insurgents spread influence and gain the active and passive support of the population. Kilcullen uses medical terminology to explain the process of how an insurgency spreads. It is interesting to note that Field Manual 3-24, *Counterinsurgency,* uses medical terminology to describe the methods of the counterinsurgent to defeat an insurgency. In the first step, the infection, insurgents establish a presence in remote, ungoverned villages and establish roots to exploit their cause or vulnerabilities in the population.[44]

The second step of the process is the contagion phase whereby the insurgents spread to other villages throughout the country establishing a wider level of support. This phase is critical to the overall insurgent strategy as successful contagion of enough areas provide the basis from which the insurgency draws its personnel and legitimacy.[45] The counterinsurgent response leads to the third stage, the intervention phase, when government forces attempt to contain or eliminate the contagion. The response may come in a variety of forms depending upon the perceived threat of the insurgency, the strength of forces available to the government, the alliances the

government has regionally and globally, as well as the perceived value of the country to the global economy and stability.[46]

Following the intervention phase Kilcullen identifies the final phase as the rejection phase. In this step elements of the population have sided with the insurgents against the government or intervening forces in an attempt to drive them out. They may not support the ideas espoused by the insurgency but they fight to reject the response of the government to the insurgency and to their internal affairs. Thus the insurgents may gain *de facto* support from the population without actually converting the population to their cause.[47]

Insurgent groups throughout the world primarily utilize four basic tactics in a coordinated strategy to defeat a government; provocation, intimidation, protraction, and exhaustion. By understanding what tactics the insurgency is employing allows the counterinsurgent to effectively employ their resources and forces to counter the threat and defeat the insurgency. Atrocities are a common hallmark of provocation and are intended to provoke or shock the government into a reaction that is detrimental. High profile attacks against non-combatants or sacred sites may cause government forces to engage in actions that alienate the population or cause religious or ethnic groups to start fighting each other. In 2004 Chechen and Islamist terrorists carried out an attack on School Number One in Beslan, North Ossetia. During the siege 334 people were killed including 161 children. The bombing of the sacred al-Askariya shrine in Samarra, Iraq in 2006 by Al-Qaeda was designed to provoke a Shi'a backlash against the Sunni's and was successful in setting off sectarian violence throughout Iraq. Perhaps the most provocative attacks were Al-Qaeda's attacks against the U.S. on September 11, 2001.[48]

Through intimidation the insurgency attempts to prevent cooperation from occurring between government forces and the population. A favorite tactic of the insurgent is the public killing of collaborators with the government or coalition forces to set an example of what will happen to others who follow a similar path. Strong insurgent forces can intimidate weak, regional government forces such as police and local governmental officials from taking appropriate countermeasures against the insurgents for fear of their own lives. Al-Qaeda has successfully demonstrated the ability to intimidate entire countries. The 2004 Madrid subway bombings days before the Spanish elections and the kidnapping of Filipino contractors led both countries to withdraw their forces from Iraq and a weakening of the coalition against al-Qaeda.[49]

Given the drastic imbalance of forces between the insurgent and the counterinsurgent, the insurgency looks to prolong the conflict for as long as possible in an attempt to wear down the counterinsurgent's resources, will to fight, and the public support for the conflict. When counterinsurgent forces react or concentrate in a specific area, the insurgent leaves or blends seamlessly into society therefore making it very difficult to apprehend. When the pressure eases or the government forces leave the insurgents reappear and carry on their mission. Anyone who may have collaborated with the government forces will be identified and killed as an example.[50]

Exhaustion is the final insurgent tactic, and one in which they look to exact as much of a toll as possible on the counterinsurgents treasure, its resources and people, in an attempt to prove that the continuation of the conflict is detrimental to their desires. The attack of convoys, the placement of improvised-explosive devices (IED), and the ambush of small patrols forces the counterinsurgent into taking steps that provides greater protection but isolates them further from contact with the population. The armoring of vehicles, the limits of patrols interaction with the populace, the use of extensive route clearing patrols, and the use of expensive protection

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equipment makes every task safer but takes longer to accomplish and carries an increased risk of death to the forces carrying out the task. Clausewitz referred to this as "fog and friction" on the battlefield and when not properly mitigated by competent, and aware leadership can ultimately lead to civil-military dysfunction. At the height of the "surge" in Iraq the United States was spending approximately $400 million per day, a level completely unsustainable for any country in a counterinsurgency which could last 10-14 years. [51]

For any insurgency, outlasting or exhausting the government is one key towards victory. "Tactics favor the regular army while strategy favors the enemy [guerrillas]."[52] The insurgent's must attempt to prolong the conflict at a level which is indefinitely acceptable to them while prohibitive to the government. Despite losing every tactical battle it will then ultimately win the war through attrition and protraction. The longer the insurgency is prolonged the more difficult it is for the government to maintain the public support, funding, and morale of its forces. By avoiding large scale conflict and the decisive victory that the government seeks, the insurgency can protract a war for as long as it has its own support base.[53] Mao Tse-tung, considered the father of modern insurgency, in *On Guerrilla Warfare* in 1937, saw guerrilla warfare as a prolonged effort and one which is critical to the overall effort. "The first law of war is to preserve ourselves and destroy the enemy."[54]

Since COIN is the combined response of government agencies to an insurgency it is imperative that the counterinsurgent thoroughly understand the nature of the conflict as well as the nature of the insurgency. Through a detailed examination of the insurgency it is possible to determine its strengths and weaknesses which will aid the government in the destruction or marginalization of the insurgents. By understanding the tactics employed by the insurgency, the

counterinsurgent can apply appropriate offensive and defensive measures and ensure it focuses

its efforts to destroy or discredit insurgent claims.

Counterinsurgent Tactics

This is another type of war new in its intensity, ancient in its origins—war by guerrillas, subversives, insurgents, assassins; war by ambush instead of by combat; by infiltration instead of aggression, seeking victory by eroding and exhausting the enemy instead of engaging him…it requires in those situations where we must counter it…a whole new kind of strategy, a wholly different kind of force, and therefore a new and wholly different kind of military training.

--President John F. Kennedy, 1962

Depending upon the style of government employed there are numerous methods a

counterinsurgent can take when faced with an insurgency. During World War II the German

Army employed an exceedingly brutal campaign of retribution by killing 100 civilians for every

soldier killed by a guerrilla or partisan. The promotion of fear was a prime tactic of the German

leaders to stop attacks against its troops and its lines of communication. The Soviet Union

likewise suppressed insurrection by sending anyone suspected to be an enemy of the state to the

Gulag in Siberia. Innocent and guilty alike were shipped without trial or proof. Fear again was

the motivator to preventing an outbreak of rebellion.[55]

In contrast to the harsh German and Soviet styles of counterinsurgency the French,

British, and American's have traditionally utilized a softer "hearts and minds" approach, though

there have been several cases of resorting to use of the sword and bayonet. The British learned

early on in their colonial experience that excessive use of kinetic force often inflamed the

population and ultimately made their job more difficult. The British slowly adapted their

procedures to employ the minimum amount of force required to restore order and to allow the

basic functions of government to operate. During the Malayan Emergency, General Gerald

Templer was able to consolidate the military, political, social, and economic strategies into a

single, united response to the threat imposed by the insurgency. He crafted a strategy to deny the

enemy the physical access to, and the passive support of the Chinese Malay population which

was fueling the insurgency. The reliance upon non-military methods as primary tools to assert

and gain control over the population was a crucial step in ultimately achieving the victory[56]

Clausewitz discussed in *On War* the Paradoxical Trinity of the three actors in warfare.

Clausewitz stated "the first of these aspects concerns the people, the second the commander, and

the third the government."[57] To be effective in warfare a nation must balance these three

elements and each has an equal legitimacy. In a counterinsurgency campaign it is more

imperative that a nation achieves balance among the elements, as each is critical to defeat an

insurgency. The civ-mil relationship between the government and its military must inspire unity

of effort while the relationship between the government and its own people must inspire trust,

confidence, and patience if involved in a military campaign at home or abroad.

The insurgency and the government engage each other not to eradicate or eliminate each

other, which is unlikely to occur, but to organize and secure the people who remain at the heart

of the paradoxical trinity. A variation of Clausewitz's paradoxical trinity illustrates the mirror

image of the insurgency vying to control the population. Outside actors, such as the United

States in Iraq and Afghanistan, bring an added dimension to the puzzle as resources are applied

to the government, the military, and directly to the people as well. Outside influence is based on

its own paradoxical trinity and the relationship of the government, its military, and its own

people determine the extent, commitment, and desire to remain in the engagement.
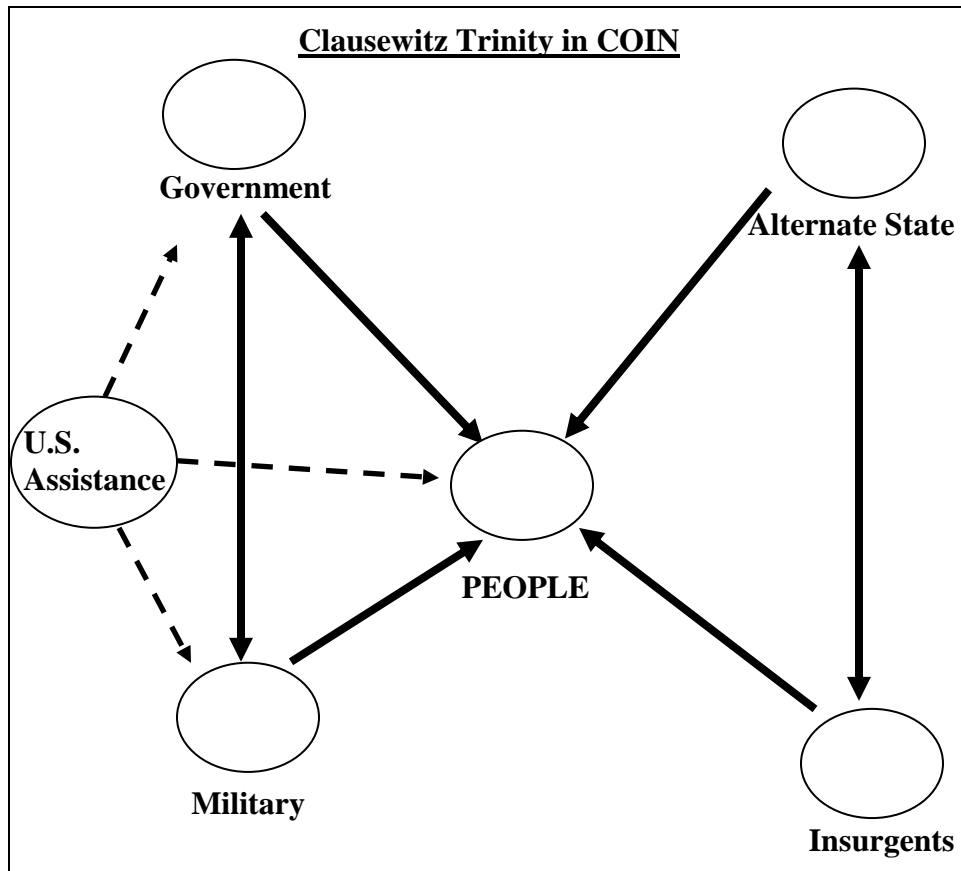
Clausewitz Trinity in COIN

Government

Alternate State

U.S.
Assistance

PEOPLE

Military

Insurgents

Figure 2: Clausewitz's "trinity" modified for counterinsurgency (adapted from Celeski, 35)

Enemy-centric approach vs. population-centric.

Determining a government's response to an insurgency requires detailed and in-depth

knowledge of the factors behind the insurgency. An understanding of the social, cultural,

economic, political, and security factors coupled with detailed intelligence on the insurgency

goals, organizational structure, and operating methods allow the government to prepare an

appropriate response. Understanding that gaining or regaining the trust and confidence of the

population is of prime importance, the government must look to employ a variety of constructive

and destructive elements in a delicate balance to defeat the insurgency without destroying its

own infrastructure or needlessly perpetuating the insurgents cause.

Two main strategies have developed in counterinsurgency doctrine, an enemy-centric and a population-centric approach. The enemy-centric approach looks to militarily defeat the enemy in order to set the conditions for the other instruments of power to be effective. This type of approach is generally offensively minded and usually incorporates direct, violent action against the insurgents in order to marginalize or decapitate the leadership.[58] To capture or kill every insurgent is generally counterproductive and futile unless the insurgents are few in number or led by a single charismatic leader whose loss would cripple the organization. More often than not this method leads to the accidental destruction or death of innocents while leading to little harm to the insurgents. The "cordon and search" operations of the U.S. military during the early years of Operation Iraqi Freedom differ little from the "search and destroy" tactics in Vietnam.

The population-centric approach focuses on maintaining or regaining the support of the population vice the destruction of the enemy. By securing and controlling the population from the insurgent's reach the government programs will be more effective and the insurgency will be forced to fight or wither and die.[59] This approach is more than simply being nice to the population and protecting them from insurgent attacks. For the insurgency to succeed they need the population to behave or exhibit certain characteristics such as sympathy, silence, or acquiescence to their will. Without the people the insurgency will wither and die. In most countries the population is fixed but the enemy is fluid. Controlling the population is possible but destroying the enemy is extremely difficult. Since the insurgent is fluid and picks his battles he controls his losses and will not be destroyed through enemy-centric methods alone.[60]

Most governments will elect to establish a mixture of the two approaches into their strategy as they look to secure the population and defeat the enemy. Galula outlined in *Counterinsurgency Warfare* that in most COIN situations there will be an active minority for a

cause, an active minority against the cause, while the majority of the population remains neutral.[61] The neutral party wishes simply to exist and seeks security, peace, stability, and prosperity and will support the side that is most able to fill their needs while maintaining their identity. This is the group that the population-centric approach looks to target as they are malleable and able to be influenced by information operations and soft-power resources. The active minority for the cause is made up of fanatics and hard-liners that will not be influenced by a "hearts and minds" campaign. This minority thus becomes the target of the enemy-centric approach and will be eliminated at the earliest possible moment.

Focusing solely on an enemy-centric is risky and leaves the population wide open to influence from insurgents. While the government forces are searching and chasing all over the country for insurgent's, small groups can easily avoid detection and attempt to win over the support of the population. If the government forces are not careful and judicious with their use of force when they meet insurgents, they can easily push the undecided population in the direction of the insurgency. The killing of innocent bystanders, no matter how many insurgents were killed in the process, or no matter the intentions will often lead to more insurgents being created. General McChrystal addresses "attrition math" in his guidance on counterinsurgency. The killing of two insurgents does not reduce the total number of insurgents by two; instead it produces more as the family members of the deceased rise to take their place. If civilians die there will be a larger net gain for the insurgency as civilians turn to them for vengeance.[62]

Isolating the population against the insurgency is not a simple or cheap task but is the essential first step to the counterinsurgent effort. To isolate the population requires protection and security to prevent insurgent influence from taking root among the people as described in the infection phase by Kilcullen. Once the population is isolated, police and intelligence units are

inserted to remove insurgent elements within the population. The population must be protected and isolated at all times from the insurgency for when government forces withdraw insurgent elements will reappear with deadly results for any who cooperated. This was seen in Iraq from 2003-2007 where coalition forces lived and operated out of large forward, operating bases and made only occasional forays into the towns and villages of Iraq.

The use of military force alone will not allow a government to prevail against an insurgency. Wielded alone it will exacerbate the issue. Only through the combined use of all of the instruments of power can a government hope to be victorious. The ultimate goal is to convince the population that supporting the government is in their best interests, and therefore requires the integration of other government power and tools rather than just military force. Military and civilian agencies must work in harmony so military success can be capitalized by political and civic actions. All facets of the government must be involved and united in effort to demonstrate economic and social infrastructure enhancements.[63]

Galula outlined a methodical eight-step process to reassert government control in insurgent dominated areas to slowly drain their power base. Overwhelming military forces were required to destroy or remove insurgent elements as well as to provide continuous security for the population. Government aid agencies would follow quickly on the heels of the military to provide or reestablish services to the population and illustrate the legitimacy and capabilities of the government. Local self-defense forces were to be trained to take over security operations on their own with augmentation and support from the government. Once the situation had stabilized and the population was secure and integrated into the government's control the military forces would move to another area to restart the process.[64]

Variations of this process have been implemented with differing levels of success throughout the world. In Malaya the British faced an insurgency perpetuated by Chinese communist peasants living on the fringe of the jungle. The British were overwhelmed initially as they attempted to utilize the style of warfare that was standard in World War II but wholly unproductive in the counterinsurgency. They were able to draw on their colonial experiences and previous uprisings to restore order through a minimum use of kinetic force. Following the failure of a primarily military response to the insurgency Sir Robert Thompson saw the population of the remote villages as the COG and believed they could be won over by a campaign targeting their "hearts and minds." Given the remoteness of the villages and their proximity to the insurgents, the British elected to move the villages into areas under their control rather than expand their control into the jungle regions. Over the course of the Malayan Emergency more than 480 new villages were established and Chinese peasants were forcibly removed from their remote homes and relocated into the government controlled villages. The resettlement was coordinated closely with a massive socio-economic program by the government consisting of self-help programs and aid for the population to provide services that the insurgents could not. With the removal of the insurgents' support and power base, the insurgency slowly diminished. This process, referred to as "clear, build, hold" has become a model for success in COIN environments and was implemented by the United States in Iraq during the surge and is currently being utilized in Afghanistan.

Since an insurgency is an uprising against the government, the government must lead the reaction to the uprising and must remain at the forefront of the response. "Tactical brilliance at counterinsurgency translates into very little when political and social context is ignored or misinterpreted."[65] Only by addressing the full spectrum of the problem, political, social, and

economic can the government adequately defeat an insurgency. Political compromise or

conciliation may be the most effective response to an insurgent's cause. Taking away the cause

for which the insurgents fight might be more effective and acceptable than the employment of

combat forces against an elusive foe in a protracted military struggle.

Unity of effort among all participants in a COIN campaign is imperative in order to

achieve control of the population. Every action in COIN sends a message to the population and

to the insurgents so it is imperative that the message be uniform across the government's

response. David Kilcullen identifies "three pillars" critical in COIN; security, political, and

economic, that all rest upon an information base. Information provides a basis for all functions

of the government and when properly balanced lead to effective control. If any of the three

pillars are out of balance then the unity of effort is at risk. Too much emphasis on economic

assistance without adequate security leads to the development of targets for the insurgents. An

overbearing emphasis on security without adequate political involvement produces an alienated

and angry population that will turn to the insurgents for the services they need. If the

government establishes food distribution centers to feed a starving population but does not

adequately protect them, then they can be potentially destroyed or captured by the insurgent to be

redistributed under their auspices, further deteriorating the government's position in either

case.[66] Each pillar is independent of the other yet must be properly balanced and developed in

coordination with each of the others while grounded on a common information base.[67]

U.S. History with COIN

As the world's sole superpower armed with unmatched conventional military forces, the U.S. has such an advantage that no nation on earth is likely to confront it force-on-force. Smart enemies of the future will avoid engaging the strength of the U.S. military, its conventional forces, and will likely focus on asymmetric forms of warfare that nullify the distinct advantages of conventional forces. Insurgency and terrorism will quite likely be the prevalent form of warfare seen on the battlefield until the U.S. masters the art of COIN.[68]

The U.S. military fascination with technology, firepower, and speed prove lethal and impressive on the conventional battlefield but has led to a fundamental alteration of its core military capabilities. In each new conflict since Operation DESERT STORM, America has sought to leverage its overwhelming technological superiority to defeat its adversaries with a minimum investment of actual manpower. Instead of a "fight and stay" mentality, the U.S. military became a "hit and run" force incapable of fighting and staying in prolonged conflicts without stretching the force. By the mid-1990's the Army was at its lowest personnel level since World War II with 475,000 troops available to support worldwide missions.[69]

The transition to high technology systems coupled with decreased force levels ensured that the entire range of military operations did not receive the same level of attention or funding. The U.S. military for the most part has ignored COIN favoring instead to focus on conventional warfare. This is understandable in large part due to the Cold War showdown with the massive conventional forces deployed by the Soviet Union, as well as the psychological consequences of the Vietnam War in which the U.S. was defeated by an insurgency. A focus on precision and the employment of maximum violence united with direct and violent assault highlighted a new

American way of war.[70] Successful COIN requires the opposite approach with a focus instead on patience, caution, and a strict limitation of violence. The fact that military planners failed to consider the possibility of an organized resistance turning into a widespread insurgency in Iraq is a lesson often repeated throughout history: the failure to recognize the conditions of an insurgency and to act quickly to destroy the organization in its infancy before it has manifested into a larger organization and gained momentum.

When employed against insurgent opponents, conventional warfare tactics have proved to be an Achilles' heel for governments that are unable to adapt or change.[71] During the Vietnam War the United States fundamentally misunderstood the type of war waged against it and placed a high level of emphasis on conventional warfare and the application of kinetic weapons in a war of attrition. In a war where with no front lines the most important objective for both sides is control of the population. "Influence over the population and support from it is what such a war is all about."[72] Major General William DePuy, commander of the 1st Infantry Division illustrates the U.S. military leaderships misunderstanding of the context of the Vietnam War in his statement, "The solution in Vietnam is more bombs, more shells, more napalm…till the other side cracks and gives up."[73]

As the first commander of the Army's Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) charged with developing doctrine and the development and procurement of new weapons systems, DePuy instilled a deep focus for conventional warfare into the Army to the detriment of COIN. The post-Vietnam version of FM 100-5 *Operations*, reflected a clear predilection for conventional warfighting, as the battle in Central Europe against the Soviet Union dominated the document. "The Vietnam war—combat with light and elusive forces- was over…The defense of

central Europe against large, modern, Soviet armored forces once again became the Army's main, almost exclusive mission."[74]

In the decades following the end of the Vietnam War the U.S. military focused almost entirely on major combat operations and while becoming the world's most effective conventional force it has been required to radically retrain itself to meet the realities of 21st century warfare in Iraq and Afghanistan. The specter of engaging the Soviet Union in the Fulda Gap in World War III has been replaced by the requirement to be engaged in COIN and nation building tasks throughout the world. The fundamental differences between conventional warfare and COIN are critical to the chances of achieving success. When you kill the civilians that you are supposed to be protecting from the insurgents, it does not matter what your intentions were or why something failed. Reliance on kinetic means to defeat an enemy that is closely interwoven with the population is wrought with danger and must be avoided whenever possible. When the population is being accidentally killed by the government, the other programs lose their effectiveness and value. Infrastructure and institutions matter little to a population that has suffered a loss due to ill-judged kinetic strikes, no matter how many insurgents were killed.

The United States rapidly defeated the Taliban and Al Qaeda in Afghanistan but was not prepared for the post-combat operations. Likewise the Iraqi Army posed no significant challenge to the U.S. during the 2003 invasion but the small invasion force was insufficient to provide security and stability to the vast region and an insurgency was allowed to grow unchecked. Poor civ-mil relations coupled with a misunderstanding of the nature of both battlefields led to the rise of the insurgency still being waged today. The U.S. military has fought hard to refocus on the tenets of COIN and has shaped itself mightily to meet the challenge for as long as it may take.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATION:

Economic development, a renewed focus on infrastructure, establishment of education programs, and government reforms mean very little to the average citizen if they are too afraid to leave their homes for fear of being killed or robbed. Lawlessness, poverty, and unemployment are fertile grounds for insurgent operations and recruitment which leads in a vicious circle back to lawlessness. Breaking this cycle requires establishing security for the population by the central government or an occupying power.[75] Once security has been established and maintained work can begin to improve civil conditions and the remaining LOO can become effective. However, local security forces loyal to the government must be established to demonstrate legitimacy of power, control of the people, and permit withdrawal of an occupying force.

It is not feasible or possible to track down and kill, capture or arrest every single insurgent who picks up a rifle, just as we cannot stem the flow of drugs into the U.S. by arresting every petty drug dealer on the street. Direct action and use of kinetic weapons have a place in COIN but understanding the second and third order effects is critical. Only by focusing on the population and the power that energizes the insurgency can the U.S. expect to be successful in COIN operations. A proper strategy might take many years to accomplish, and securing the population during this period is crucial to separate the insurgents from their source of power and prevent further recruitment of forces.[76]

Despite several successful COIN campaigns the U.S. has never fully understood or embraced the concept. The U.S. has scored some notable successes in COIN engagements, notably the Marines in Central and South America during the 1920s and 1930s, the Phoenix Project in Vietnam from 1968-1972, and El Salvador in the 1980s, but the lessons learned from

each have largely been forgotten.[77] COIN operations and theories received little attention in military doctrine and national security policies after U.S. forces left Vietnam.[78]

Following the Vietnam War the top U.S. military leadership was focused on transforming the military into a smaller, more high-tech force capable of fighting large, conventional battles against their peer enemy, the Soviet Union. Developing a force to engage in nation building was not a priority and top political leaders such as President George H.W. Bush and President Bill Clinton looked to avoid entangling U.S. forces in such affairs. Yet after years of failure to achieve our objectives in Iraq and Afghanistan, the military services were forced to redevelop doctrine related to the form of warfare they were engaged in, counterinsurgency.[79] The Army and Marines established FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*, in late 2006 to address 25 years of neglect of COIN and the USAF created AFDD 2-3, *Irregular Warfare,* in 2007 to address its void.

Insurgency will continue to be a major, national security concern of the U.S. for the foreseeable future and all functions of the U.S. government must be utilized to meet the challenge. The focus on COIN must shift from solely a DOD-centric mission to a whole-of-government approach utilizing all aspects and powers of the nation. Not only must the government's focus on COIN become more broad, it must also go deeper down within each agency. All elements and levels of a participating agency must be trained and educated to understand what is expected of them and how their actions can have positive and negative consequences. The idea of a "Napoleon corporal" or "strategic corporal" is a reality in COIN as the lowest levels of an agency can have a negative strategic impact on the operation.[80]

Successful counterinsurgent campaigns have blended military and civic action into a cohesive mix to mitigate the cause utilized by the insurgents or to destroy those unwilling to reintegrate into society.[81] While there is no such thing as a COIN recipe to follow, there are

certain foundations that are required to be established, chiefly security of the population and establishment of self-defense forces capable of long-term, sustained protection. The true aim of counterinsurgency must be to reestablish peace, not the use of violence. The goal should be not to use force at all, but when it is required, to use maximum force with minimum violence to achieve a decisive victory and to prevent collateral damage.

Long-term security is best achieved by the establishment of local, indigenous forces capable of providing for their own self-defense. Local self-defense forces, when properly trained and equipped will release government troops or occupying forces for other missions throughout the country or to return to their native country. These forces will form the nucleus of the government's security apparatus and as such the process cannot be rushed without fear of failure.[82] "Do not try to do too much with your own hands. Better the Arabs do it tolerably than that you do it perfectly. It is their war, and you are to help them, not to win it for them."[83]

Counterinsurgency is a complex and long-term undertaking for which there are no technological innovations, no silver bullets, nor magical weapons which will provide a rapid conclusion. By studying COIN engagements from the past and applying appropriate lessons learned to the present, the United States can improve much about effective techniques and procedures. Insurgencies adapt to changing times and technologies and no two insurgent campaigns are identical, but all seek legitimacy in the eyes of the population and as such the population becomes the primary center of gravity. By protecting and securing the population and training those that ally with the government or occupying power to defend themselves, victory can be obtained.

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[1] Hammes, *Insurgency,* 3n,

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[2] Marston, *Counterinsurgency in Modern Warfare,* 220

[3] Corum, *Fighting the War on Terror*, 30

[4] Jones, *Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan,* 93

[5] McChrystal, *ISAF Commander's Counterinsurgency Guidance,* 1

[6] Marston, *Counterinsurgency in Modern Warfare,* 227

[7] Corum, *Fighting the War on Terror,* 55

[8] Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare,* xii

[9] McChrystal. *ISAF Commander's Counterinsurgency Guidance,* 1

[10] Field Manual (FM) 3-24, *Counterinsurgency,* 3-13

[11] Corum, *Bad Strategies,* 155

[12] Corum, *Airpower in Small Wars,* 238

[13] Corum, *Airpower in Small Wars, 237*

[14] Johnson, *Learning Large Lessons, 202*

[15] Corum, *Airpower in Small Wars,* 273

[16] Marston, *Counterinsurgency in Modern Warfare, 134*

[17] Marston, *Counterinsurgency in Modern Warfare,* 143

[18] Corum, *Bad Strategies,* 157

[19] Marston, *Counterinsurgency in Modern Warfare,* 131

[20] Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare,* 66

[21] Beckett, *Modern Counterinsurgency,* xi

[22] Joes, *The History and Politics of Counterinsurgency,* 6

[23] Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla,* 262

[24] Corum, *Bad Strategies,* 208

[25] Harvard, *Counterinsurgency in Iraq,* 18

[26] US Govt Counterinsurgency Guide, *U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Guide,* 315

[27] Field Manual (FM) 3-24, *Counterinsurgency,* 5-1

[28] Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare,* 28

[29] Mansoor, *A New COIN Center-of-Gravity Analysis,* 47

[30] Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare,* 4

[31] O'Neill, *Insurgency & Terrorism,* 93

[32] Field Manual (FM) 3-24, *Counterinsurgency,* ix

[33] Mansoor, *A New COIN Center-of-Gravity Analysis,* 46

[34] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War,* 595-596

[35] Reilly, *Operational Design,* 25

[36] Reilly, *Operational Design,* 21

[37] Joint Publication (JP) 5-0, *Joint Operations,* GL-11

[38] Joint Publication (JP) 3-0, *Joint Operations,* GL-11

[39] US Govt Counterinsurgency Guide, *U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Guide,* 321

[40] Joint Publication (JP) 3-0, *Joint Operations,* GL-11

[41] Joint Publication (JP) 3-0, *Joint Operations,* GL-12

[42] Reilly, *Operational Design,* 27

[43] Celeski, *Operationalizing COIN,* 52

[44] Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla,* 36

[45] Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla,* 37

[46] Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla,* 37

[47] Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla,* 38

[48] Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla,* 30

[49] Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla,* 30

[50] Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla,* 31

[51] Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla,* 32

[52] Joes, *Resisting Rebellion,* 10

[53] Joes, *Resisting Rebellion,* 11

[54] Mao Tse-Tung, *On Guerrilla Warfare.* Translated by Samuel B. Griffith II. Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2000, 20

[55] Corum, *Fighting the War on Terror,* 84

[56] *Counterinsurgency, 3*

[57] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War,* 89

[58] US Govt Counterinsurgency Guide, *U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Guide,* 318

[59] US Govt Counterinsurgency Guide, *U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Guide,* 317

[60] Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla,* 146

[61] Galula, *Counterinsurgency,* 53

[62] McChrystal, *ISAF Guidance,* 2

[63] Corum, *Fighting the War on Terror,* 84

[64] Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare,* 56

[65] Marston, *Counterinsurgency in Modern Warfare,* 16

[66] US Govt Counterinsurgency Guide, *U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Guide,* 317

[67] Kilcullen, Three Pillars of Counterinsurgency, 4

[68] Kilcullen, Three Pillars of Counterinsurgency, 1

[69] Corum, *Fighting the War on Terror,* 70

[70] Joes, *Resisting Rebellion,* 6

[71] *Counterinsurgency,* 2

[72] Thayer, *War Without Fronts,* 137

[73] *Counterinsurgency,* 5

[74] Johnson, *Learning Large Lessons,* 203

[75] Corum, *Fighting the War on Terror,* 95

[76] Corum, *Fighting the War on Terror, 96*

[77] Bates, *The War on Terrorism,* 7

[78] Field Manual (FM) 3-24, *Counterinsurgency,* vii

[79] Corum, *Fighting the War on Terror,* 101

[80] Bates, *The War on Terrorism,* 10

[81] Joes, *The History and Politics of Counterinsurgency,* 9

[82] Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla,* 2

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